

European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-2013

2004/0165(COD) - 05/07/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish the tasks of the European Social Fund (ESF).

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation 1081/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation 1784/1999/EC.

CONTENT: this Act sets out the specific provisions concerning the type of activities which may be financed by the ESF. The Regulation defines the scope of ESF assistance, sets out more specific provisions relating to its implementation and specifies the types of expenditure eligible for assistance. It has been adopted within the context of the reformed EU Cohesion Policy (2007-2013) and has come into force alongside four other related legislative acts. They are:

- Council Regulation 1083/2006/EC laying down the general provisions on the ERDF, ESF and the CF. For a summary of its provisions see AVC/2004/0163.
- Council Regulation 1080/2006/EC on the European Regional Development Fund. For a summary of its provisions see COD/2004/0167.
- Council Regulation 1084/2006/EC establishing the Cohesion Fund. For a summary of its provisions see AVC/2004/0166
- Council Regulation 1082/2006/EC on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC). For a summary of its provisions see COD/2004/0168.

The more general framework of the ESF, as part of the overall Cohesion Policy, can be found in Regulation 1083/2006/EC (AVC/2004/0163).

To recall, the ESF was set up by Article 146 of the Treaty on European Union. Only the ERDF and the ESF are defined as the 'Structural Funds'; the Cohesion Fund being separate. Together the three programmes are referred to as 'the Funds'. The total budgetary allocation earmarked for the Funds, between 2007 and 2013, has been set at EUR 308 billion.

The purpose of the ESF is to strengthen economic and social cohesion by improving employment opportunities across the EU. To that end the ESF has been tasked with strengthening economic and social cohesion by improving employment and job opportunities; to stimulate a high level of employment and to create more and better jobs. It will only be made available under the Convergence and Regional competitiveness and employment objectives, which have been codified under Regulation 1083/2006.

Actions approved for funding under the ESF must support the Member States' employment strategies, they must promote social inclusion (including access for disadvantaged people to employment), and seek to reduce national, regional and local employment disparities. ESF actions are expected to be in line with guidelines adopted under the European Employment Strategy, which have been incorporated into the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs.

The kind of assistance foreseen includes: making the workforce adapt to change through lifelong learning measures, apprenticeships, e-learning, management skills and the promotion of business start-ups. Other measures eligible for ESF support include supporting more productive work techniques and outplacement initiatives; enhancing access to employment; reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and promoting employment partnerships.

Special attention has been given to: good governance and partnership; to gender equality and equal opportunities; to innovation and to transnational and interregional actions. Provisions have been set out concerning technical assistance; the presentation of annual Reports on the Regulation's implementation and the eligibility of expenditure. Lastly, the Regulation will not affect the continuation or modification of assistance already approved by the Commission on the basis of Regulation 1784/1999/EC, which is now repealed.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 1 August 2006.